

VZCZCXYZ0002  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTG #0701/01 1152118  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 252118Z APR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
TO RHMFIUU/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5633  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/DIRJIATF SOUTH PRIORITY  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAHND/CDRJTFB SOTO CANO HO PRIORITY  
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 000701

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM FOR ADMIRAL STRAVIDIS  
STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC, H, PM, AND INL  
HOMELAND SECURITY FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY JACKSON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [OREP](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)

SMIG, SNAR, HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN PRESIDENT MEETS WITH DHS DEPSEC JACKSON AND CODEL THOMPSON

¶1. (SBU) Summary: President Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales expressed a desire to increase law enforcement cooperation with the United States, his support for CAFTA and comprehensive immigration reform during a bilateral meeting with DHS DepSec Jackson and a CODEL consisting of 9 members of the House Committee on Homeland Security on April 11-12, 2007. The CODEL and DepSec used the opportunity to present their views of security initiatives in Honduras based on their observations of the Secure Freight Initiative (SFI) pilot program at Puerto Cortes. Both the DepSec and the CODEL appeared satisfied with the cooperation the GOH has given to the SFI, and they reaffirmed the USG's desire to cooperate on security matters and consult on immigration policy. End Summary.

PORT VISIT

¶2. (SBU) The CODEL/DepSecDel visit began with a two and half hour joint program at Puerto Cortes, an SFI facility on the north coast of Honduras. Following brief introductory remarks by the Managing Director of the National Port Company, Edwin Araque, Chairman Thompson, and Deputy Secretary Jackson, the group, accompanied by the Ambassador, moved to the Central Alarm Station (CAS). In the CAS, co-located GOH tax officials and CBP and DOE personnel monitor data from the Radiation Portal Monitors and Non Intrusive Inspection (gamma ray) scanners. CODEL Members closely questioned CBP briefers and Jackson about SFI implementation. Following the CAS inspection, the parties moved to the scanners themselves and a brief press availability. Coverage of the visit focused on the security aspects of SFI and its implications for Honduran/U.S. trade. Several Members of Congress later expressed satisfaction with the level of support and cooperation between US Customs agents and port officials. They viewed this pilot SFI program as a success.

MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT

¶3. (SBU) In Tegucigalpa, the groups met jointly with President Zelaya. Zelaya's initial remarks were followed by a joint discussion. Topics were immigration reform, including a possible extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program; challenges facing the Honduran economy; free trade; and narcotraffickers.

¶4. (SBU) Zelaya began the meeting with a wide-ranging opening speech, and discussed a new security plan among the Central American nations (CA-4). He emphasized that while the existence of this plan is public, the details are not. Zelaya gave few details to the

delegation, mentioning only the desire for better communication among CA-4 police forces to facilitate tracking and arrest of criminals who cross CA-4 borders. Rep. Jackson-Lee asked how the US could help Honduras in the law enforcement arena. Zelaya responded with two items: assistance with the fight against drug trafficking on the north coast, and with identification and reintegration of violent deported felons. (Note: ICE/DRO already gives the GOH notice of removals and identifies criminal deportees. ICE seeks an agreement with the GOH that would facilitate data sharing, which would help the GOH better identify criminals. End note.) Zelaya also mentioned his openness to increased law enforcement information and intelligence sharing with US authorities. It is also noteworthy that President Zelaya acknowledged the narcotraffickers are stronger and richer than the Honduran police.

15. (SBU) President Zelaya linked security to free trade, saying violence must be reduced to entice investment in Honduras. He further stated that he believes free trade will help the Honduran economy. Zelaya specifically stated his support for CAFTA and noted its positive economic effects will help bring Honduras out of poverty. He noted that tourism has already started to increase and believes this is a result of CAFTA.

16. (SBU) In response to President Zelaya's question on immigration reform, Rep Cuellar stated the need for three items: secure borders, a simpler temporary worker program, and a decision on the status of the 11-13 million undocumented aliens in the US. Cuellar was emphatic it would be a difficult process and was uncertain there would be a consensus by this summer. Also on immigration, DepSEC Jackson acknowledged that the US had received the GOH communique regarding TPS and was considering the Honduran analysis, but that the USG would respond through formal channels.

17. (SBU) Rep Lundgren asked President Zelaya if wealth disparity and lack of education were impediments to aid programs. Zelaya put the blame for Honduras' poor economic performance over the past several decades squarely on the Honduran people themselves. He blamed corruption, emanating from powerful vested labor organizations (teacher unions, the Honduran Bar Association, the Medical Association, etc) and the Honduran upper-class, as the prime impediment to rapid economic development. He said that these groups prefer to live in splendid isolation, free of competition, and have effectively created barriers to market entry through their informal political influence. He added that this prevents the use of capital for the creation of growth and jobs. Zelaya also pointed out these interest groups have no desire to pay taxes, thus leaving the Honduran government without the resources to function effectively and resist these groups' influence. Amazingly, Zelaya said the Honduran Teacher's Union is stronger than the GOH.

18. (SBU) Neither the DepSec nor the CODEL had an opportunity to clear on this cable.